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PROVISIONAL VERBATIM RECORD OF THE 54th MEETING

Held at Headquarters, New York,
on Tuesday, 3 November 1992, at 10 a.m.

President:	Mr. GANEV	(Bulgaria)
later:	Mr. MONGBE (Vice-President)	(Benin)

- Report of the United Nations Conference on Environment and Development [79] (continued)

  (a) Report of the Conference

  (b) Report of the Secretary-General

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The meeting was called to order at 10.40 a.m.

AGENDA ITEM 79 (continued)

REPORT OF THE UNITED NATIONS CONFERENCE ON ENVIRONMENT AND DEVELOPMENT

(a) REPORT OF THE CONFERENCE (A/CONF.151/26, vols. I-IV and vol.II/Corr.1)

(b) REPORT OF THE SECRETARY-GENERAL (A/47/598 and Add.1)

Mr. BRAHIMI (Algeria) (interpretation from Arabic): It is my pleasure to speak before the Assembly on behalf of of the Islamic Republic of Mauritania, the Kingdom of Morocco, Tunisia, Libya, and Algeria. The fact that the member States of the Arab Maghreb Union have decided to speak with one voice on the item relating to the United Nations Conference on Environment and Development attests to the very particular importance they attach to the question of the environment and its organic relationship with the process of development.

Desertification and drought, marine and fresh water industrial pollution, the scarcity of water resources, particularly of drinking water, in addition to soil erosion and rapidly increasing demographic pressures, are the principal environmental problems facing the countries of the Maghreb. While desertification affects one quarter of the world's land surface, it engulfs more than 90 per cent of the land surface of the Arab Maghreb countries. In addition to the phenomenon of spreading desertification from the south, most of the Maghreb countries are equally threatened in the north, by the negative effects of Mediterranean pollution.

Petroleum products are by far the largest source of that pollution, as 50 per cent of the world's fuels are transported across the Mediterranean, where there are usually no less than 2,000 tankers at any one time. Consequently, more than 17 accidents on the scale of the Exxon Valdez incident take place, on average, unheralded, every year, in the Mediterranean. More

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than 650,000 tons of petroleum are spilled annually into that partially enclosed sea. Recently, the Atlantic coasts of Morocco came very near to suffering the devastating effects of an oil spill that could have produced a veritable black tide. Furthermore, the northern part of the Mediterranean also receives various other forms of the effluent of industrial pollutants.

Proceeding from their awareness of the need for concerted efforts in facing up to such challenges, the countries of the united Arab Maghreb have decided to include environmental protection on the list of their common priorities. With that aim in view, a working group on the environment and water was established. As a result of the deliberations of the working group, the following cooperative projects have been adopted, to this date: First, a Maghreb strategy to fight desertification has been agreed; Secondly, the results of the Maghreb "Green Dam" project have been assessed and certain aspects of the project have been reconsidered; Thirdly, the establishment of an African network for monitoring and data exchange on desertification and soil erosion is under way; and Fourthly, an overall study of the state of the environment in the Maghreb countries has been undertaken.

The working group has been instrumental in the adoption of the Maghreb Charter for the Environment and the formulation of a plan to supply drinking water to the countries of the region. This plan constitutes an important part of the Maghreb development strategy included in the project of establishing an Arab Maghreb economic union. It has been decided to proclaim 17 June of each year as Maghreb Environment Day and 21 February as Maghreb Tree Day.

In the context of discharging their environmental protection responsibilities, the Arab Maghreb countries have adopted the following basic principles: First, deterioration of the environment and underdevelopment cannot be viewed as an inescapable destiny; development is not necessarily

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inimical to the environment, just as the environment is not antithetical to the requirements of economic growth.

Secondly, excessive unchecked industrialization and the persistence of underdevelopment are at the very root of the destruction of the environment. This is further aggravated by unsustainable modes of production, consumption and transportation.

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Thirdly, the damage caused by environmental pollution and the negative consequences of underdevelopment do not stop at State borders and do not recognize the North-South divide.

Fourthly, no country, regardless of the level of its development, its size or its economic muscle, can face up on its own, to the ecological challenge.

Fifthly, if the restoration of world ecological balance requires, in the case of some, the integration of environmental concerns into the development process, it requires, in the case of the overwhelming majority of mankind, a durable resurgence of economic growth through a new North-South partnership.

These basic principles have shaped and guided the positions of the Member States of the Arab Maghreb Union both during the Rio de Janeiro conference itself and throughout its preparatory phase.

The Rio de Janeiro conference, without a doubt, will continue to be a fundamental frame of reference in understanding and addressing the question of the environment, especially with regard to its organic relationship with the requirements of development. Thanks to the remarkable conceptual contribution made by the Earth Summit, it is now difficult, if not impossible, to address the question of the environment without linking it to the requirements of development.

The Conference gave rise to a genuine process of diagnosis. Clear-cut undertakings were made, ambitious programmes of action were adopted, lofty principles were established and important conventions were signed. A new process was initiated and an important stage was reached and left behind.

However, there now remains another stage, which can be deemed decisive for more than one reason, namely that of implementing the resolutions which

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were adopted. It is incumbent now upon this session of the General Assembly to complete the work that was begun, by responding to the resolutions that were agreed.

In this respect, the establishment of the high-level Commission on Sustainable Development (CSD) acquires special importance. In its conception, its nature and its functioning, this Commission could be an appropriate framework for national and harmonious management of development and the environment in a manner that could lead to sustainable development that is equitably shared by all.

However, this new institutional framework within of the United Nations system must avoid the pitfalls of deviation from the goals for which it has been set up. Such deviation may be caused by a possible schism between the functions of policy formulation and the coordination of policies on the one hand, and the process of financing the programme activities, on the other. The same pitfalls should be avoided in the operation of the implementation mechanisms which will be established in conformity with the international conventions concluded at the Earth Summit.

The achievement of the objectives assigned to those institutions necessarily involves strict respect for the commitments undertaken by the industrialized countries in terms of substantial, new and additional financial resources, as well as the transfer of ecologically sound technology on preferential and concessional terms, to the developing countries.

The achievement of such objectives also requires an improved international economic environment through correcting the terms of trade, access to the markets of the industrialized countries and the settlement of the external debt crisis which overburdens the developing countries.

(Mr. Brahimi, Algeria)

This session of the General Assembly is called upon to respond to the Rio Conference's recommendation regarding the establishment of an intergovernmental negotiating committee to draw up by June 1994, an international convention on combating desertification, especially in Africa.

The Arab Maghreb, which participated effectively in the formulation of that initiative, will continue to participate in and contribute to its implementation.

In that context, my country, Algeria, will be happy to host, in the heart of the Sahara, the world's largest desert - at Tamanraset, Djanet, Timimoun or anywhere else - a meeting of the bureau of the intergovernmental negotiating committee whenever it becomes operational.

The Member States of the Arab Maghreb Union express the hope that the process of drawing up this convention will elicit, on the part of the developed countries, the same interest and care shown towards the United Nations Convention on Climate Change and the Convention on Biodiversity.

The results of the Earth Summit, including the adoption of binding legal instruments, were made possible by the spirit of compromise and the concessions agreed to by the developing countries. For this reason, reservations were expressed at the closure of the summit by certain of the developing countries. Those reservations, in effect, stem from reflect legitimate interests and reflect widely shared concerns and, therefore, cannot be ignored. They should be taken into account when it comes to any future in-depth work being done to follow up and develop further the results of the Rio de Janeiro conference.

Consideration of the results of the Rio de Janeiro conference comes at a time when the United Nations finds itself engaged in renewal and

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revitalization of its intergovernmental machinery and administrative support structures. An opportunity is therefore afforded to match the political interest shown by the United Nations since the ending of the cold war with similar achievements in the field of sustainable economic development. Such an opportunity must be seized in full measure if the Organization is to be able to achieve the noble objectives of universal peace, prosperity and security it was created to achieve.

Mr. ALDERS (Netherlands): Minister MacLean spoke yesterday on behalf of the European Community and its member States, but I am pleased now to address this plenary meeting on a number of specific topics of the United Nations Conference on Environment and Development (UNCED).

UNCED has been praised by many people as a major step forward on the road towards integrating environment and development. My Government agrees with that view. Others have proclaimed UNCED to be a costly failure, pointing to the lack of concrete results and to the many unresolved problems. My Government understands their position, even if we do not agree with it. When highlighting these drawbacks, they are right, up to a point. UNCED has not yet produced global, concerted action to abolish poverty and to safeguard our planet. UNCED yielded few concrete financial commitments.

But UNCED has put the problems in the right context. It has connected the protection of our global environment with the right to development for all nations. It has put sustainable development firmly on the political agenda. Therefore, UNCED was a success.

But we did not finish our task in Rio. We agreed there to fulfil the Rio agreements at the forty-seventh session of the General Assembly - to elaborate further on intergovernmental follow-up and on financial commitments. At UNCED, many countries said that it was too early to make firm commitments. So we are here today to discuss ways and means of consolidating and working out the results we brought with us from Rio de Janeiro. To a great extent, UNCED still has to be put into practice, and we are running out of time.

Of course, there are many difficulties to overcome. Changes have taken place in Central and Eastern Europe and throughout the world. We are now

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living in a different world. The political and military tensions that paralysed the international community for decades have relaxed. But economic and political liberalization do not always go hand in hand. This new situation requires a new approach to development and to the environment.

UNCED gave us a clear signal. Let us recognize it: it was a warning sign. We have always thought that the possibilities on Earth were never-ending. How grave an error that was! Our planet is not as secure a spot in the universe as we thought it was. The threats to it are manifold: the climate may be changing; desertification and erosion are the rule rather than the exception in many countries; poverty and hunger keep millions of people in misery; and the untold riches of our complex ecosystems are diminishing every day.

A famous Dutch economist, Jan Tinbergen, has said:

"We always thought that our possibilities were endless. Now we know that there is a limit to everything, even to our own wishes".

And he is right. Our common future is at stake, and therefore UNCED was a necessity. It has taught us to think seriously about our future as human beings on this fragile planet.

Maybe the most important outcome of UNCED was our realization that, in order to make the world a safe place to live for our children and their children, we have to combat poverty. In a world where people's first concern remains their food for tomorrow - or even for today - sustainability is impossible in the long run. Sustainable development also means the fair allocation of development.*

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* Mr. Mongbe (Benin), Vice-President, took the Chair.

(Mr. Alders, Netherlands)

We did not come to New York only to look back at Rio and to assess the value of UNCED. Enough fine words have been said. Today we are here to look ahead. A major challenge would be to define the so-called environmental space, the carrying capacity of the world's ecosystems, and to develop criteria for its allocation and distribution. We must realize that the environment cannot be used for free. We must internalize environmental externalities; only then can we determine whether the market works. Scarcity has to dictate price. Instruments such as tradeable emission rights could be applied. If the total emission load imposed on ecosystems were limited, financial resources would become available that could enable developing countries to prevent the use of resource-intensive and polluting technologies. I highly recommend this topic for intensified international action.

The same goes for other economic instruments, such as levies or taxes applied to the input side of the economic system. So far, we have focused on the output side, charging for emissions and waste streams. In our quest for integrated life-cycle management, a levy or tax on input that would finally be reflected in the prices of products will most probably prove to be more effective. An internationally applied tax on energy could be the first step towards an international eco-tax.

The overall fear that ecological measures will be taken at the expense of the economy is in our view not justified. Many studies done in Europe have proved that in certain fields, especially energy conservation, financial instruments are sometimes the only way to realize environmental improvement. A higher tax on fuel does not have to result in the loss of jobs, as has often been said. In our opinion, it will even stimulate employment, but it will be

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a different kind of employment. And even more important: it will stimulate development - sustainable development.

We acknowledge the need expressed in Agenda 21 for sustainable-development plans. In our country, we have devised a form of "green" planning called a national environmental policy plan. This is a process of developing and implementing a long-term policy that will lead to significant environmental improvement on a sustainable basis, and it is accompanied by a package of measures for the next four to eight years. We have set targets for the year 2000 and 2010, and we will revise the plan every four years to verify that with our present policy we can reach these targets. The plan is based on cooperation between the Government and the relevant social sectors, such as industry, consumers and agriculture. We would be happy to share our experiences with other countries.

It is interesting to see how the debate on changing consumption and production patterns gained momentum in the Netherlands after UNCED. The clear UNCED message - that Western consumer lifestyles are not compatible with long-term sustainability - has been well understood. Within our administration, we have embarked on a detailed comparison of Agenda 21 and our own domestic policies, in order to identify what we are already doing and where we need to do more. It is at that point that it becomes clear how comprehensive a document Agenda 21 really is.

We have prepared agreements on sustainable development with Benin, Bhutan and Costa Rica, based on mutual commitments. In these bilateral agreements, the Netherlands commits itself to restrict its demand on the environment. The other countries promise to prevent the use of resource-intensive production processes and to divide the profits fairly.

(Mr. Alders, Netherlands)

We had already started the implementation of the Climate Convention even before we signed it. The Netherlands target for carbon dioxide is a 3 to 5 per cent reduction in the year 2000. We have to reach stabilization at the 1990 level between 1994 and 1995. This fits within the European Community (EC) target of stabilization, as a first step for the year 2000. Maybe this EC concept of burden-sharing, which means that the overall target will be reached, but with some countries reaching the target earlier than others, could be followed.

We ratified and are implementing the biodiversity Convention. And, of course, we are also stimulating discussion in the EC to speed up the post-UNCED process. And last but not least, together with my British colleague, I still attach great importance to the issue of desertification and forestry. Indeed, we think more binding agreements in the field of sustainable forest management are needed, preferably in the form of a forestry convention.

Therefore, we need to have a strong body within this family of United Nations to monitor and steer all these efforts, a body that is in broad terms responsible for the implementation of the UNCED agreements. We welcome the establishment of a high-level Commission on Sustainable Development.

With regard to the composition of the Commission, it is clear that we have to strike a careful balance between efficiency and involvement. It is essential that the Commission actually be capable of handling the many difficult jobs that will come its way. Therefore, it should be a high-level body of a workable size and should meet at a political level, with ministers as members. On the other hand, we should like to see maximum involvement, in order not to lose the momentum of the UNCED process. My colleague Mr. Pronk,

(Mr. Alders, Netherlands)

Minister of the Development Cooperation, indicated earlier that the work of the Commission could be facilitated by having some advisory bodies do a substantial amount of preparatory work on, for instance, reports. These bodies could ensure more involvement by Member States by having a membership based on rotation.

Of course, the Commission has to be authoritative; therefore, we are convinced of the necessity of holding meetings of the Commission at the ministerial level at least once a year, for part of the time the Commission is in session. Only then will the results of the work of the Commission get immediate attention, even if its recommendations have to go through the Economic and Social Council before reaching the General Assembly. We have to take decisions, to reach agreement on the establishment of a Commission that will be well-equipped for its task, not only to reflect, but also to guide further work, and agreement on the position and form of the secretariat and maybe of some subsidiary bodies.

The secretariat should be clearly identifiable and positioned close to the Secretary-General. It is important that such a secretariat be seen as working full-time for sustainable development, not only within the Commission on Sustainable Development, but also in relation to other United Nations bodies dealing with economic and social issues. It is of the utmost importance that sustainable development be more closely integrated into the work of bodies like the Economic and Social Council, the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), the United Nations Conference on Trade and Development (UNCTAD) and the regional economic commissions. It is important that the secretariat be located in a city where all countries are permanently represented, including the least developed countries and the small island States.

(Mr. Alders, Netherlands)

An important function of the Commission on Sustainable Development, besides the monitoring of the implementation of Agenda 21, is the guidance of the implementation of the commitments made. That includes the implementation of the commitments made in the field of financial resources and transfer of technology. Sustainable technologies are available, but the transfer to developing countries still has to be pushed. It is one of the tasks of the Commission to get it off the ground. We need environmentally sound technologies world-wide, and we need them badly.

I was happy to see last week in Paris, at the United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP) meeting on clean technology, that there are some interesting technology projects sponsored by the international business council. The Netherlands is willing to participate financially in this kind of concrete technology project in Egypt, Senegal and Zimbabwe. To get these technologies incorporated into our socio-economic structures, we have to pay more attention to capacity-building. This strengthening of institutional capabilities and arrangements will be one of the functions of the Commission.

Capacity-building has to support the integration of environment and development at regional and national levels, and UNDP and UNEP should play an important role in it. Of course, I do not have to underline again the crucial role of UNEP in the implementation of Agenda 21.

The Commission also has to keep under review the national programmes that will be submitted to it. To keep the discussion going, it is important that the national reports made for UNCED be updated regularly.

Another important aspect of the work of the Commission is the role of the non-governmental-organization community. As we have all seen, non-governmental organizations have made a substantive contribution to the UNCED process. They helped to focus our discussions on the issues that need

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further consideration and decisions. They can give voice to the interests of environment and development and to the needs of people who otherwise would not be heard. Sustainable development is an unattainable goal if it is not supported by the people affected by it. The non-governmental organizations have a very important intermediate function in generating and sustaining that support. We therefore want to continue the meaningful participation of the non-governmental-organization community, particularly in the work of the Commission. We believe that the accreditation procedures developed during the UNCED process should be the basis for the participation of non-governmental organizations in the work of the Commission.

One of the most important issues monitored by the Commmission is that of financial commitments. We all know that for sustainable development major changes are needed, and major changes require major resources. My Government firmly holds the opinion that, in view of the different contributions to global environmental degradation, States have common but differentiated responsibilities. The industrialized countries therefore bear a special responsibility in the international approach to sustainable development, not only because of the pressures their societies place on the global environment, but also because of the technologies and financial resources they command.

My colleague Mr. Pronk has spoken in detail on the financial follow-up to Rio. In Rio we agreed that substantial new and additional funding for sustainable development is required. We promised to augment these resources and to ensure prompt and effective implementation of Agenda 21. I wish it were no longer necessary to highlight this need.

I said it in Rio, and I say it again today: The Netherlands is prepared to live up to this responsibility. The concept of new and additional financial resources must not be an empty phrase, but has to be translated into

(Mr. Alders, Netherlands)

real financial commitments. Otherwise, we shall take the very heart out of UNCED. But the negotiations within the World Bank for the tenth replenishment of the International Development Association (IDA) showed us that the spirit of Rio may already be fading away. We should not allow this to happen, either within the World Bank or within the European Community. As my British colleague said yesterday, we are working hard within the EC to implement as soon as possible the offer made in Rio of an initial contribution of 3 billion European Currency Units. In our view we still need a substantial replenishment of IDA. On top of that, we should add a substantial Earth increment to show that we are willing to put into practice what we agreed to in Rio. Furthermore, we should aim at increasing the resources of the Global Environment Facility to a level of about the same size as the tenth replenishment of IDA, apart from the necessity for restructuring the Facility.

(Mr. Alders, Netherlands)

We need new resources, but they also have to be additional ones. In our opinion, at least 50 per cent of the pledges made in the framework of UNCED should be really new and additional. My Government is already spending more than 0.7 per cent of its gross national product on official development assistance. We have decided to add another 0.1 per cent, specifically designated for the abatement of global environmental problems in the developing world, provided that other industrialized Governments take similar steps. Countries that have not yet achieved the 0.7 per cent target promised in Rio to do so as soon as possible. Real implementation of UNCED is not possible as long as we do not make real progress on this issue.

The time has come to face the future together. No longer can the short-term objectives of single States determine the course of global history. The basis of our existence as human beings is threatened, and we have to work together to put things right again. In Rio some 180 countries made agreements. Today they are gathered here in New York. It is the right time and the right place. So let us stop talking. We have been talking for year after year, we have been travelling from conference to conference. Now the only thing we have to do is to put the Rio agreements into practice. Let us do just that. The world and its people, our people, need it, and they need it badly.

Mr. MERIMEE (France)(interpretation from French): The French delegation is in full agreement with the statement made by Mr. David MacLean, the United Kingdom Minister of State for the Environment and Countryside, on behalf of the European Community and its member States. I shall therefore mention only a few aspects of the subject before us, the follow-up of the United Nations Conference on Environment and Development (UNCED), held in Rio.

(Mr. Mérimée, France)

The Commission on Sustainable Development should be the principal forum for the follow-up of the Rio Conference. We believe it should enjoy the support of the work of a high-level advisory board, consisting of eminent persons knowledgeable about environment and development, which should independently formulate views and proposals on questions relating to the follow-up of UNCED and the implementation of Agenda 21. Its members will be appointed by the Secretary-General. We must see to it that its work receives suitable publicity. The Committee for Development Planning provides a foundation on which the advisory board can be established.

We must also institute the negotiating process designed to lead to the adoption of a convention to combat desertification. France has supported that proposal from the beginning. Indeed, we consider it a question of survival for many developing countries, particularly in Africa. The international community, which mobilized on the questions of climatic change and the conservation of biological diversity, must not stand idly by. France will contribute to the work of the negotiating committee, support it and make available to it all the expertise it has acquired in this area.

I now turn to the question of financial resources. On this point, as on others, we must be wary of trying to repeat the Conference. The agreement reached in Rio was the result of lengthy negotiations. The texts adopted, with the agreement of all, cover nearly all existing financial instruments. We must avoid reopening them.

However, the adoption of texts is not enough; it must be followed by action - if possible without delay. In Rio we undertook to report on the implementation of the measures announced at UNCED, and to do so at this session of the General Assembly.

(Mr. Merimée, France)

France, which will naturally play its part in the actions of the European Community, has committed itself to achieve by the year 2000 the goal of devoting 0.7 per cent of its gross national product to official development assistance. That solemn commitment was made in Rio by the President of the Republic. In 1992 our official development assistance should therefore amount to F40 billion, or approximately $8 billion. In 1993, subject to approval by the French Parliament, it will rise to F43.3 billion.

The share of finances devoted to sectors given priority status in Agenda 21 - urban environment, water, energy, land resources, forests - will be increased to F4 billion over three years, including a significant amount of additional resources. That programme, centred on actions relating to the transfer of technologies, institutional support and the fight against poverty, will total F1.2 billion by 1993. This effort will be continued, and we urge other wealthy countries, not only developed countries, to do likewise.

The Rio Conference profoundly altered our approach to the problems of development and the environment. The United Nations must take this into account in restructuring its activities in the economic sphere. We support the efforts of the Secretary-General in this regard, and we believe that the follow-up of UNCED must henceforth have a central place in activities of the United Nations.

Mr. EGELAND (Norway): Five years have passed since Prime Minister Gro Harlem Brundtland presented the report (A/42/427) of the World Commission on Environment and Development - "Our common future" - in this very Hall. In her introductory statement the Chairman of the Commission said:

(Mr. Egeland, Norway)

"Our report is not a prophecy of doom but a positive vision of the future. Never before in human history have we had greater possibilities. The time and the opportunity have come to break out of the negative trends of the past. We need not only a new vision but political commitment and a broad mobilization of human ingenuity. We need intensified multilateral cooperation based on recognition of the growing interdependence of nations." (A/42/PV.41, pp. 9-10 and 11)

I think we all agree that the Chairman's words are even more true today than they were five years ago.

The World Commission brought the concept of sustainable development and the interlinked issues of environment and development to the top of the international political agenda. In many ways the Commission's report constitutes the basis and background for the process of the United Nations Conference on Environment and Development (UNCED) as a whole.

Only the implementation of the results of Rio can tell us whether UNCED was successful or not. But the adoption of the Rio Declaration, Agenda 21 and the forest Principles, as well as the signing by more than 150 countries of the Convention on Climate Change and the Convention on Biological Diversity, in itself represents a major achievement.

In Rio world leaders committed themselves to a new partnership for sustainable development and confirmed the interlinkage between environment and development.

(Mr. Egeland, Norway)

UNCED and, in particular, the Rio Declaration, established a number of central principles on sustainable development to which we attach particular importance. They are based on the fundamental premise that the integration of environment and development concerns must be achieved in all sectors and economic policies, and that the link between poverty and environment must be addressed if we are to achieve sustainable development.

The Rio Declaration represents a delicate balance between the many interests and concerns represented. Norway, for its part, would have wished to see stronger and more clear-cut principles. We therefore support the idea put forward by Secretary-General Boutros Boutros-Ghali and the Secretary-General of UNCED, Mr. Maurice Strong, that consideration should be given to further developing the Declaration into a more solemn, full-fledged "Charter" for adoption by the General Assembly in 1995 at the fiftieth anniversary of the United Nations.

The value of internationally accepted principles should not be underestimated. The Human Rights Declaration and the Stockholm Declaration are examples of the lasting importance of such principles when they are gradually developed into international "soft law".

UNCED must be followed up at all levels - locally, nationally, regionally and globally. Local and national follow-up and implementation are essential, but regional and global follow-up are equally important. The General Assembly must at this session take crucial decisions in this regard, in particular on follow-up by the United Nations system as a whole. The transboundary nature of environmental problems requires expanded and strengthened international cooperation.

Important action is being taken in many countries to halt environmental degradation at the local level. Progress has also been made in solving such

(Mr. Egeland, Norway)

regional environmental problems as air pollution and global problems as the depletion of the ozone layer. None the less, we have only just started. The general trend is still towards global environmental deterioration. There is growing scientific evidence that the scope of human activity will soon surpass the carrying capacity of the Earth. Rio emphasized this diagnosis. But in Rio the leaders of the world also committed themselves to both individual and common measures and strategies to attack the problem at all levels, including the interrelated economic development problems facing, in particular, third world and the Eastern European countries with such gravity. Implementation of these measures and strategies must start now.

In Rio the Heads of State and Government confirmed the World Commission's conclusion that close interlinkages exist between poverty and the environment, that poverty is at the same time a cause and an effect of environmental degradation, and thus constitutes one of the greatest obstacles to sustainable development.

The present gap between rich and poor, between and within countries, is unacceptable. Attacking poverty through policy change must be a main element of the follow-up to UNCED. Technical and financial assistance, job creation, human resources development, improved market access and further debt reduction, as well as ensurance of public participation in decision-making at all levels, are essential. This will help provide the developing countries and their people with a real choice to break the vicious circle of poverty, environmental degradation and social tensions. Particular efforts should be made to include women in decision-making at all levels. Consumption patterns must be changed to reduce their adverse impact on the environment. Active population policies are also called for, with due consideration to personal integrity.

(Mr. Egeland, Norway)

At UNCED, it was recognized that the implementation of Agenda 21 will require the provision of substantial new and additional financial resources to developing countries. In addition, relevant technologies must be made more easily available to developing countries. We must realize that these are the main critical factors on which the success or failure in implementing Agenda 21 in developing countries will depend.

In the UNCED process the Nordic countries presented a financial packgage for mobilization of resources for global, as well as local and national purposes, in the context of follow-up and implementaion of the results from Rio, in particular, Agenda 21. Central parts of the proposal were: first, industrialized countries should commit themselves to meet the target of 0.7 per cent of gross national product for official development assistance (ODA) by the year 2000; secondly, industrialized countries should commit themselves to provide new and additional financial resources to meet the incremental costs of developing countries in addressing global environmental problems; and thirdly, the financial contributions must be based on fair burden-sharing between donor countries.

Norway will maintain a high ODA level, which at present exceeds 1 per cent of our gross national product. Moreover, we will continue to press for implementation of the main elements of the Nordic financial package. Norway has advocated a substantial contribution to the tenth replenishment of the International Development Association (IDA), which can maintain the value of the ninth replenishment of IDA in real terms in order to allow IDA to integrate Agenda 21 objectives into its operations. Maintenance of the International Development Association's real value is also required as a basis for an "Earth increment" in IDA.

(Mr. Egeland, Norway)

It is of crucial importance to ensure that financial resources for global environmental problems are genuinely additional to development assistance, in accordance with the climate and biodiversity Conventions, and as pointed out by the World Bank in its 1992 World Development Report. However, trends in this regard are cause for concern.

The replenishment of a revised Global Environment Facility (GEF) must be based on fair burden-sharing according to the commitments under the Conventions on climate and biodiversity. In this regard, a clarification of the term "agreed full incremental costs" is essential. Norway will fulfil its financial commitments under the Conventions through provision of new and additional financial resources, that is, in addition to ODA funds.

Although institutional follow-up is called for in many areas and contexts, the General Assembly's main focus at this juncture will be the establishment of the Commission on Sustainable Development. At UNCED, Norway strongly supported the establishment of a high-level Commission, and we are prepared to play an active part in it from the outset. Its main task has been defined by UNCED: to monitor and review UNCED follow-up by countries and international institutions, in particular the implementation of Agenda 21. In this context, the Commission will review progress in the implementation of commitments related to the provision of financial resources and transfer of technology.

In order to be able to fulfil these tasks, the Commission must meet regularly. We believe an annual session of two to three weeks, including a high-level segment with ministerial participation, would be appropriate.

(Mr. Egeland, Norway)

The Commission should have a multi-year work programme, allowing for in-depth study of selected parts of Agenda 21 at each session. In addition, each session should deal with the central cross-sectoral issues contained in Agenda 21, in particular the provision of financial and technological resources. As to the size of the Commission, we believe it should have the same number of members as ECOSOC or somewhat fewer. We also favour participation in the work of the Commission by observer governments along the lines practised in ECOSOC. The Commission should be supported by a small but highly competent secretariat. The secretariat should be independent, and be headed by a person at a high level - that is, an Under-Secretary-General - reporting directly to the Secretary-General.

At the inter-agency-level, the Secretary-General should take an active and leading role as chairman of the Administrative Committee on Coordination (ACC). The ACC must take full responsibility for ensuring efficient coordination at the inter-agency level of the follow-up to Rio and the integration of environment and development in the activities of the United Nations system as a whole. We trust that the newly-established ACC Inter-Agency Committee on Sustainable Development will assist the ACC and the Secretary-General effectively in discharging their coordination functions in this vital area.

The Norwegian Government has always been a strong supporter of the United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP) and the important activities performed by the Environment Programme. We therefore welcome the recommendation from UNCED to strengthen UNEP within its present mandate. UNEP should continue to perform its catalytic role and be the environmental conscience of the whole United Nations system. In particular, the capacity of UNEP with regard to environmental monitoring and data collection should be strengthened.

(Mr. Egeland, Norway)

Norway has supported the proposal to initiate an intergovernmental negotiating process to elaborate an international convention to combat desertification by June 1994. Our views on this issue and the forthcoming negotiations have already been expressed in the Nordic statement on environmental questions in the Second Committee. UNEP's estimate is that 80 per cent of drylands and rangelands in sub-Saharan Africa show signs of desertification. Considering that desertification is the largest and most immediate issue of concern to Africa, it is unfortunate that the Plan of Action to Combat Desertification adopted in 1977 never generated enough enthusiasm and resources to realize its objectives. We should keep this lesson in mind when elaborating the new convention. Norway believes that the issue of desertification, particularly in Africa, deserves more serious attention and commitment from the international community than in the past, and we intend to play a constructive role in the forthcoming negotiations.

The Forest Principles adopted in Rio provide a valuable basis for further development of international cooperation for sustainable use of all forests. In particular, it is important that the Principles strike a balance between protection and utilization of forest resources which will facilitate a continued international dialogue with a view to further strengthening international cooperation in this field.

The Conventions on climate change and biological diversity should enter into force as soon as possible. Norway plans to ratify both Conventions during the first half of 1993. The provisions of the climate Convention for joint implementation of commitments will facilitate cost-effective solutions

(Mr. Egeland, Norway)

and open up a new source for transfers of financial and technological resources, in particular to developing countries. In the follow up to the Convention, it is important that these provisions be made operational. Norway will participate actively in this work. It is also important to maintain momentum on the issue of biological diversity.

One of the most positive features of the UNCED process was the active participation of non-governmental organizations and groups. The fact that one of the four main sections of Agenda 21 is entirely devoted to the role of major non-governmental groups speaks for itself in this regard. The involvement of non-governmental organizations must be safeguarded and strengthened in the follow-up to UNCED. The General Assembly should, in accordance with Agenda 21, examine ways of enhancing the participation of non-governmental organizations within the United Nations system as a whole in relation to the UNCED follow-up process. In this regard we must further develop and refine the procedures used in the UNCED process with a view to finding efficient and manageable arrangements for the participation of non-governmental organizations.

In conclusion, I would like to emphasize the following: What we must now avoid at all costs is, after Rio, returning to business-as-usual. We must ensure that the momentum generated by the UNCED process is maintained through the establishment of a strong and viable follow-up at all levels, locally, nationally, regionally and globally. The General Assembly has a crucial role to play in this regard.

Mr. NEAGU (Romania): The United Nations Conference on Environment and Development (UNCED), held in Rio de Janeiro last June, met an imperative need for a reorientation of development strategies in order to ensure global stability and ecological balance.

(Mr. Neagu, Romania)

In Rio we all became more aware of the conflict that has arisen between, on the one hand, society and its natural environment as two distinct systems and, on the other, the interdependence that exists between economic growth and natural resources, which are the basis of any living system. As a result, the Conference established a new and equitable global partnership through the creation of new levels of cooperation among States, key sectors of societies, and people. The old concept of development-at-any-cost was replaced by the new concept of sustainable development, a concept having most important consequences for the future evolution of the world economy and for the continuation of life on our planet.

The Rio Conference achieved an important goal by adopting the Declaration and the comprehensive action programme set forth in Agenda 21, which provides viable answers to the complex issues of environment and development. Of particular importance, in our opinion, are the 27 principles contained in the Declaration to govern the economic and environmental behaviour of individuals and nations in the quest for global sustainability. The Declaration unequivocally proclaims that human beings are at the centre of concerns for sustainable development and are entitled to a healthy and productive life in harmony with nature, that the right to development must be fulfilled so as equitably to meet the developmental and environmental needs of present and future generations, and that in order to achieve sustainable development environmental protection shall constitute an integral part of the development process and cannot be considered apart from it.

(Mr. Neagu, Romania)

Agenda 21, a blueprint for action towards sustainable development, covers all areas affecting the relationship between environment and economy. The action programmes address the most topical and urgent issues, such as protection of the atmosphere and of the oceans; combating deforestation, desertification and drought; the meeting of basic human needs such as health, education and housing; and the eradication of poverty. The Agenda spells out the specific steps necessary for progress towards sustainable planetary development; it represents, I would venture to say, the centerpiece of international cooperation and the key to coordination of activities within the United Nations system for many years to come.

The Non-Legally-Binding Authoritative Statement of Principles for a Global Consensus on the Management, Conservation and Sustainable Development of All Types of Forests calls for efforts to be undertaken towards the greening of the world. According to that Statement,

> "All types of forests embody complex and unique ecological processes which are the basis for their present and potential capacity to provide resources to satisfy human needs as well as of their environmental values."

The Principles address the issue of forests and their resources as both environmental and economic assets. The Romanian people are very sensitive to the need for protecting forests. Traditionally, the forest has served to protect our people against all types of threats: a Romanian legend says that the forest is brother to the Romanian. That is why the Romanian delegation in Rio welcomed the proposal by the United States of America to enhance international cooperation for the protection of forests.

(Mr. Neagu, Romania)

The signing in Rio, by 153 countries as well as the European Economic Community, of the Framework Convention on Climate Change and the Convention on Biodiversity is another important result of the UNCED process. Both Conventions represent a first for the Earth. The Convention on Climate Change launches a process of cooperation aimed at keeping greenhouse gases in the atmosphere within safe limits. In the case of biodiversity, the Convention clearly reaffirms the international community's commitment to conserving the work of creation and preventing it from deterioration. It represents a turning point in the protection of the life forms that nourish the Earth.

Even though the Rio documents may not cover all fields of major ecological threats, and though certain provisions may not meet all our expectations, these documents do represent an important step forward. In fact, the sooner they are put into operation on a global scale, the greater their real value and impact will be.

The Rio Conference is but one moment on a long road. Its historic importance lies in the awareness that has been created, the decisions that have been taken and the mobilization to which it has given rise.

The forty-seventh session of the General Assembly is another important moment. We must first of all endorse the instruments resulting from UNCED, including Agenda 21, the Rio Declaration and the Non-Legally-Binding Authoritative Statement of Principles for a Global Consensus on the Management, Conservation and Sustainable Development of All Types of Forests.

Secondly, in conformity with the agreements reached in Rio, we must take concrete measures to create a high-level commission on sustainable development and a high-level advisory board, to convene the first global conference on the sustainable development of small island developing States, and to convene an

(Mr. Neagu, Romania)

intergovernmental conference on straddling fish stocks and highly migratory fish stocks.

Thirdly, we should invite all organs, programmes and specialized agencies of the United Nations system and other appropriate international and regional organizations to consider and to take, within their respective mandates and areas of expertise, concrete measures for implementing the relevant provisions of Agenda 21 and other documents adopted by UNCED.

Fourthly, the General Assembly should ask the Administrative Committee on Coordination (ACC) to ensure effective monitoring, coordination and supervision of the follow-up of UNCED and to this end to invite all heads of United Nations agencies and institutions to cooperate fully with the Secretary-General to make ACC more effective in fulfilling its tasks and to ensure successful implementation of Agenda 21.

Finally, we must take a decision on holding a special session of the General Assembly not later than 1997 for the overall review and appraisal of Agenda 21, with adequate preparations.

It is our duty to keep alive the spirit of Rio in all its dimensions - political, economic, environmental and social - in order to ensure the full and effective implementation of Agenda 21, the Rio Declaration and the Statement on forest principles.

Romania is firmly determined to take an active part in the efforts required to achieve these objectives. We shall participate at the national level, as well as through broad international cooperation, both regional and global. We attach great importance to the activities of the proposed high-level commission on sustainable development whose overall objective is the integration of environment and development issues at the national,

(Mr. Neagu, Romania)

regional and international levels, including in the United Nations system. To this end, the Romanian delegation is ready to cooperate with other interested delegations in preparing the draft resolution on the establishment of such a commission.

In concluding my statement, I would like to mention briefly some of the preoccupations of my country, at the national level. As is known, Romania, like other East-European countries, is going through a most difficult but irreversible transition process aimed at the full elimination of the structures and mentalities inherited from the totalitarian regime. Notwithstanding these difficulties, the environment ranks high on our priority list. For example, we are in the process of combating soil erosion, deforestation, salinization and alkalinization of irrigated soils, air and water pollution, the loss by certain ecosystems of their natural regulating functions, degradation and pollution of the seashore and coastal areas and the use of polluting technologies. We are increasingly concerned with the solution of such problems as acid rain, the disposal and transfer of toxic wastes, and potential accidents at reactors of certain power plants in our region that are operating with old and unsafe technologies. We pay utmost attention to the danger represented by attempts to turn territories of developing countries and countries in transition into waste-dumping areas, Romania itself having been affected by such attempts.

(Mr. Neagu, Romania)

As the President of Romania said in Rio de Janeiro, we are ready to organize in Bucharest, with international assistance, a centre for the promotion of an ecological European space, taking into account the specific problems of the Danube basin, the Carpathian mountains, the Black Sea and the Danube Delta, which is a unique ecological area on our continent.

Mr. JARAMILLO (Colombia)(interpretation from Spanish): Once again we should like to say how pleased we are with the successful manner in which Mr. Ganev has been guiding this session of the General Assembly. His political experience, intelligence and well-known diplomatic skill have undoubtedly been very important factors in what we have achieved so far.

The United Nations Conference on Environment and Development (UNCED) held at Rio de Janeiro in June 1992, which followed two years of preparatory work, is a milestone in history. For the first time the international community fulfilled its commitment and proved its ability to deal with the subjects of environment and development in a closely interrelated way.

The Earth Summit will be regarded as the point at which it became accepted that one cannot have development without taking account of the environmental factor. For their part, environmental considerations must include the possibility for all countries to exploit their resources rationally. We must face up to the great challenge left to us by the Rio de Janeiro Conference: we must look at the future from a distinct perspective, dealing with the same subjects of international interest which are on the agendas of all countries, and therefore at the United Nations as well, from a different standpoint, name.y that of the indissoluble link that exists between the environment and development.

(Mr. Jaramillo, Colombia)

The road to Rio de Janeiro - which will continue until we achieve development for all countries - showed us that we have an equal but different responsibility, and that developing countries cannot base their growth strategies on the same parameters which the industrialized countries have been using for decades, namely, degrading the environment in the pursuit of economic well-being. It showed us that it is vitally important to help the developing countries achieve the goal of prosperity by making available the resources and technologies needed for development without degrading our resources.

Internationally, this responsibility should take shape within the United Nations system. It is this Organization which began the process that led to Rio de Janeiro and which has to continue with its role of facilitator, mediator and monitor of the challenge of joint development, while at the same time caring for the resources we shall leave to future generations.

In real terms this means that countries must enunciate national policies in accord with the collective commitment to have priorities and perspectives for development, while considering as a prime factor respect for the environment. These national policies should become definite programmes and specific actions.

The changing world in which we live compels us to adjust our institutions according to the problems we have to solve. One of the major tasks of this session of the General Assembly is the establishment of the Commission on Sustainable Development, a mandate which derives from the conclusions of UNCED. We take note of the recommendations made in this regard by the Secretary-General when he addressed the Assembly on 2 November 1992, but we believe that it is not prudent to prejudge the work which - as he rightly

(Mr. Jaramillo, Colombia)

said - we the governments must carry out in establishing and defining the composition as well as the procedures of the Commission on Sustainable Development - a task which we shall only be beginning this week under the wise leadership of Ambassador Razali of Malaysia.

Colombia considers that this Commission has two major tasks. The first is to follow up and evaluate the way in which all countries include the set of initiatives adopted in Agenda 21, agreed to at the Rio de Janeiro conference, in their national policies, programmes and actions. The other major task is to coordinate the United Nations system for a follow-up of the Rio de Janeiro recommendations, while maintaining the coherence of present programmes and whatever the General Assembly decides in the future.

We go along with what the Secretary-General said in that statement to the General Assembly, namely that the reform of the Secretariat will depend on Member States, which have the final say in adopting his suggestions. We understand the functioning of the Secretariat and of its Head, the Secretary-General, as the interpreters of the sovereign will of all the countries of the Organization. The Secretary-General was elected by countries to carry out the mandate of the Charter and the policies adopted by the General Assembly and the other bodies. Therefore, his action and his capacity to act are strictly regulated by these instruments and he can act only through the authority derived from them. The recommendations for the restructuring of the Secretariat in general, which he proposed, lead us to state that Colombia will study them very carefully and make the corresponding observations on them in the appropriate forum.

As for the location and the tasks of the secretariat of the Commission on Sustainable Development, we believe that the Secretary-General of the Organization, when establishing it, should also interpret the collective will

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of the Member States, namely to have an efficient secretariat of an adequate level, thus preventing any frustration of the efforts made over so many years, given the possibility of establishing a Commission on Sustainable Development without adequate operative capacity. The functions of the secretariat of the Commission, which were described quite accurately by the Secretary-General in his report, demonstrate the need for it to operate at the highest level in order to comply fully with the tasks agreed at the Summit Conference.

Finally, it is countries whose mandate at the Earth Summit is contained in Agenda 21 which are responsible for guaranteeing that the decisions adopted in the Commission on Sustainable Development are fully implemented, and that will be ensured by participation in the Commission at the highest level.

What is described as "the spirit of Rio" is the solidarity in work which was manifest among all countries to achieve the necessary balance which has to be maintained between the needs of development and those of the environment. In this way, we shall be respecting the legacy which we owe to future generations.

(Mr. Jaramillo, Colombia)

It was in interpreting the spirit of Rio that the developing countries undertook the commitment to seek social and economic well-being while taking care of our environment, so as not to make the same mistakes the industrialized countries made in their growth process.

It is in developing this spirit that we require the industrialized countries to change those development patterns that contribute to the degradation of the environment. It should be pointed out that these policies are contributing to global warming, to the destruction of the ozone layer, to the rise in the sea level, to acid rain and to so many other phenomena whose impact goes far beyond national borders.

And it is in this spirit that the countries of the third world are prepared to rationalize our growth process, with the understanding that in the area of development, industrialized countries must shoulder the responsibility of supporting the development of our economies with the necessary financial resources and technology.

Colombia is prepared to support, and committed firmly to supporting the establishment, effective functioning and success of the Commission on Sustainable Development - and sustainable development, in its proper meaning, cannot but be a success for humankind.

Mr. ARRIA (Venezuela) (interpretation from Spanish): The confrontation between the super-Powers is no more. We are now finally beginning to live in a time that offers us the unprecedented moral opportunity to make it possible for our people to live in a far better world - a crucial right that humankind has long been deprived of.

In Rio - at the Earth Summit - we began to appreciate and give priority to the global environmental reality, which shows clearly that we share the

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responsibility of either enhancing or degrading the environment, that all countries must assume their share of an essentially indivisible effort, and that the course of events now depends on us.

In Stockholm in 1972, the preamble to Rio, the international community began a process of global reflection, but the political will to introduce the necessary reforms was lacking. Over the years we lost many opportunities to stimulate deeper environmental awareness in a system conditioned and dominated by economics, whose indifference to environmental matters would not allow for the changes that needed to be made in the irrational production and consumption patterns followed mainly by the more developed countries. Since then, we not only have not been able to progress very far in the preservation of the environment but, regrettably, have not advanced the development process. We have been affected by the adverse global economic climate.

It was not possible in Rio to satisfy all our aspirations and all our expectations. That was not the purpose of the extraordinary Earth Summit. However, we did succeed in adopting Agenda 21 - the most ambitious and most comprehensive programme of action ever agreed to by the nations of the world - and this was done at the level of Heads of State and Government. Our respected and dear friend Maurice Strong, leader at both Stockholm and Rio, rightly pointed out that Rio is the basis of a new global society that

"will unite rich and poor, North, South, East and West".

(A/CONF.151/26 (vol.IV), p. 55)

Because of the spirit generated at Rio and because of the extraordinary and generous hospitality of the people and Government of Brazil, we began to make progress in changing the attitude of the rich towards the poor; took a new approach to multilateral diplomacy; gained a new awareness of the

(Mr. Arria, Venezuela)

interdependence of the problems of development and the environment, encapsulated in the new approach to development: namely, that it must be sustainable. Without a doubt, Rio represented the beginning of a commitment by world leaders to face this responsibility on a global scale. The presence of 94 Heads of State and Government speaks for itself.

Rio also created a series of expectations that mobilized and sensitized world public opinion, and almost all the recommendations of the Conference prove that the rich and the poor can reach agreement on matters that affect them.

Sir Shridath Ramphal, the former Secretary-General of the Commonwealth, has summarized the spirit and commitment of Rio in the following thought:

> "Each one of us, man, woman or child, rich or poor, of whatever race or whatever religion, must begin to assume a dual citizenship. We must all, without exception, belong to and feel that we belong to two countries: our own and the planet".

In Rio we all agreed to the drafting of a set of principles contained in what the summit called the Rio Declaration, which already forms part of the international environmental law that will govern the ethical conduct of nations in the future.

We also agreed to the establishment of the Commission on Sustainable Development, whose main function will be to see to it that the programme of action is implemented, which of course will not be possible without a genuine intention and a political commitment to move towards the attainment of sustainable development in both the North and the South. After Rio the world will not be the same. A new, more global perception of environmental problems and development is taking hold. Venezuela, my country, is committed

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to implementing sustainable-development policies that will neither jeopardize nor sacrifice future generations.

The first inhabitants of Latin America and the Caribbean - the Mayas, the Aztecs and the Incas - were pioneers in sustainable development. Their empires achieved impressive, indeed monumental, development without damaging or degrading the environment in which they lived. On the contrary, they enriched their future.

We Venezuelans have had a special concern for development, but we have not neglected the preservation of the environment. It has been 15 years since we set up our Ministry of the Environment and adopted the first criminal law relating to the environment as well as rules for the protection of flora and fauna that have placed us in the vanguard on this issue.

The Commission on Sustainable Development doubtless represents the institutionalization of the Earth Summit and constitutes a forum for reconciling interests and strengthening many fragile agreements, which we know were reached by stretching many of our positions to the very limit. The United Nations Association of the United States has pointed out in its last report - rightly, I believe - that:

> "The Commission should be structured as an entity that is sufficiently flexible to adapt to changes, to be fully in evolution and be an instrument for shaping the new world that is emerging rather than a repetition of the old one".

(Mr. Arria, Venezuela)

My country hopes to participate in the Commission on Sustainable Development because we are convinced that this aspiration is justified by our long tradition of supporting and defending the environmental interests not only of our country but of the world. To ensure that the guidelines of the Commission on Sustainable Development are duly applied, the President of Venezuela is this week establishing a national commission on sustainable development as a structure for the coordination and follow-up of the Rio agreements, which Venezuela intends to implement. The commission will be made up of representatives of the public, academic, scientific, labour and entrepreneurial sectors and of non-governmental organizations.

The developed countries have no choice. A refusal to transfer the necessary resources and technology for sustainable development in the poorest parts of the world would be an act of suicide, and the human species is not by nature suicidal. The problem lies in the time frame in which that reality is accepted and acted upon, because delays will make the solutions far more costly in every aspect.

Rio owes much to the zeal, devotion and militant sensibility of the non-governmental organizations. We believe that their participation should be encouraged and guaranteed in the work of the Commission on Sustainable Development. We believe that their inclusion is crucial, because their legitimacy and credibility will depend on the degree to which they participate. Agenda 21, with vision and realism, recommended that these non-governmental organizations be ensured an active role. My country fully concurs with that recommendation.

I should like to conclude with two thoughts. The first relates to the explosive population growth concentrated in the poorest countries, putting the capacities, will and political responsibility of their Governments to the

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test. We will grow from 5.5 billion inhabitants to 8.5 billion in the next 35 years. This undoubtedly serious projection, together with the levels of poverty in the world, represents determining variables for the difficult and monumental challenge of sustainable development. The second thought relates to the moral responsibility of Governments in preserving biodiversity, a responsibility similar to that of maintaining health and security. Biodiversity is an irreplaceable public resource, and 3 billion years of evolution were necessary to create it. It is therefore hardly encouraging to know that 99 per cent of the species of the flora and fauna that have existed at one time or another are extinct. Even less encouraging is the fact that at least one fifth of species is now threatened with disappearance in the next 30 years. Despite the invaluable and irreplaceable support that ecosystems give to humanity, we remain determined to degrade if not destroy them.

I have just read an extraordinary warning by Professor Edward Wilson in his book The Diversity of Life. I venture to quote from it because I believe that it will provide food for thought to all of us who are determined to pursue this, humanity's very best cause:

> "Our problem is that we do not know what we are and that we cannot agree on what we want to be because we are ignorant of our own origins.
>
> "We did not come to this planet as strangers. Mankind is a part of nature. It is a species that evolved in the midst of other species, and the more we identify with the rest of the other forms of life, the sooner we will discover the sources of the human sensibility. We will thus be able to acquire the knowledge that is indispensable for building an ethic and a correct sense of direction. The Earth is our guide to the birthplace of our spirit - a spirit that we are losing!"

Mr. ZARIF (Islamic Republic of Iran): I would like to begin by offering my appreciation to all those who contributed to the success of the United Nations Conference on Environment and Development, as well as to the Government and the people of Brazil for hosting the Conference.

The Rio Conference on Environment and Development, 20 years after the Stockholm Conference, provided a unique opportunity to address issues of the environment and development in a fully integrated manner. The presence of about 102 Heads of State or Government underscored the significance of the Conference and its role in forging a new international partnership between North and South for the purpose of achieving sustainable development.

The Rio Conference was not an end, but rather a beginning of the process to promote sustainable development world wide. This process, which aims at implementing the programme of action agreed upon in Agenda 21, should be guided constantly by the defined set of principles embodied in the Rio Declaration on Environment and Development. In this context, we would like especially to emphasize the imperative of fulfilling the right to development for developing countries. This is necessary equitably to meet both the developmental and environmental needs of present and future generations. Of equal importance is the sovereign right of States to exploit their own resources pursuant to their own environmental and developmental policies. Initiatives aimed at the protection of the environment should not by any means undermine these two crucial rights, which have been properly reflected in the Rio Declaration.

Two important factors were emphasized by most Heads of State or Government during the Conference. First, the environmental capacities of the Earth are limited and can no longer tolerate the unsustainable patterns of production and consumption of the North; and, secondly, without sustained

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economic growth and development in the developing countries, the chances for the South to make tangible contributions to the international crusade for the protection of the environment are indeed slim.

The environmental problems of the developing countries stem mainly from their lack of development and economic prosperity. With their very limited access to financial resources and their chronic struggle with economic problems, the allocation of resources to the protection of the environment is, if not impossible, very difficult. Making economic and environmental choices becomes very difficult as decision-makers are often faced with conflicting values and priorities - to invest in the environment or to respond to the basic needs of their own people. In most cases, of course, the second choice takes precedence, while at the same time the determination to safeguard the environment is further constrained by a reluctance on the part of the developed countries concerning the transfer of technology and the flow of financial resources.

Clearly, no one can expect the developing countries to do their share to protect the environment with bare hands. Fortunately, Agenda 21, recognizing the significance of the provision of new and additional financial resources and transfer of technology on concessional and preferential terms, has set modalities for further cooperation in these areas.

(Mr. Zarif, Islamic Republic of Iran)

I should now like to turn to matters that require action at the current session of the General Assembly. First, let us turn to the question of a Commission on Sustainable Development

Among the various post-UNCED activities this year, the General Assembly should discuss the establishment of a functional Commission on Sustainable Development. As mandated by the Conference, this Commission has a set of crucial responsibilities, including that of monitoring progress made in the implementation of Agenda 21, especially with regard to provision of financial resources and transfer of technology to developing countries. In doing so, it should review activities of financing resources and mechanisms in order to create an effective link between the availability of new and additional financial resources and the implementation of Agenda 21. In this respect, in order to ensure expeditious implementation of programmes of action envisaged by the Conference, the Commission at its first session should deliberate on and review initial financial commitments by developed countries and monitor additional grant and concessional funding provided by the restructured Global Environment Facility.

As far as the venue is concerned, we think that the Commission should be located at United Nations Headquarters in New York, unless any volunteer host country is ready to bear the costs of facilitating the participation of small States in the Commissions's deliberations. Furthermore, supportive Secretariat arrangements are essential to ensure the Commission's smooth functioning. In this context, there is the need for a separate secretariat, composed of qualified personnel and headed by an Under-Secretary-General.

(Mr. Zarif, Islamic Republic of Iran)

Secondly, I wish to refer to financial resources. Agenda 21, in highlighting the significant role that adequate financial resources play in the protection and enhancement of the environment, properly notes that

"The cost of inaction could outweigh the financial costs of implementing Agenda 21. Inaction will narrow the choices of future generations." (A/CONF.151/26 (vol. III), para. 33.4)

Therefore, we hope the developed countries will take advantage of this opportunity, and, in line with our agreement at Rio under chapter 33 of Agenda 21, during the current session of the General Assembly will make initial financial commitments which give tangible effect to the decisions of the Conference.

Thirdly, let us turn to transfer of technology. Given the contribution of transfer of technology to protection of the environment, and in line with chapter 34 of Agenda 21, ways and means should be explored to translate the agreements into concrete programmes. In this regard, and bearing in mind the close relation between transfer of technology and financing, two courses of action are essential: first, working on specific, actual costs and financial terms for transfer of environmentally sound technology and, secondly, reform of patent protection and intellectual property rights, with a view to assuring access to and transfer of environmentally sound technology to developing countries.

Fourthly, let us turn to the matter of an international convention to combat desertification. Desertification is a major contributor to the degradation of the environment, in particular in Africa and Asia. This problem adversely affects about one sixth of the world's population, 70 per cent of all dry lands - amounting to 3.6 billion hectares - and one quarter of the total land area of the world. Nevertheless, there have been

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major weaknesses in the policies, methods and mechanisms adopted thus far to support activities of the developing countries to combat desertification. These statistics, combined with the horrible images of drought and desertification victims, make the importance of international cooperation to combat desertification quite clear.

Owing to its long history of suffering from serious desertification and land degradation, the Islamic Republic of Iran attaches great importance to the drafting of an international convention on desertification. Expeditious establishment of an international negotiating committee for the preparation of such a convention hinges, to a great extent, upon an increased common understanding of the urgency and seriousness of this problem.

Apart from short-term initiatives to assist developing countries to fight environmental problems, we must simultaneously work on permanent solutions. For a developing nation it will be very difficult, if not impossible, to achieve self-sufficiency in handling its environmental problems unless supportive international economic conditions exist.

The world economic situation during the past year has, unfortunately, not been promising. The international economic environment has, to a great extent, hampered the sound recovery of the economies of the developing countries after the economic recession and stagnation of the 1980s, thus further constraining their response to environmental problems. The slow-down in economic growth world wide, increased protectionism, high interest rates and burgeoning indebtedness have resulted in many other problematic consequences, including widespread unemployment, poverty, hunger, malnutrition and environmental degradation.

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Exacerbating an already bad situation is the fact that no real, significant attempts have been made to reverse the maladies of the international economy or to make it more responsive to the needs of all nations. Indeed, income disparities have widened unabatedly in recent years, further widening the already wide gap between rich and poor nations. Uneven distribution of economic activities and opportunities world-wide has led to a situation in which the richest 20 per cent of the world's population receives 82.7 per cent of the total world income, while the other 80 per cent receives only 17.3 per cent. As a result, most developing countries face a long road towards recovery from the economic stagnation of the 1980s. It is therefore evident that without a positive change in this critical trend, the developing countries will not be able to contribute their share in the international crusade to protect the environment.

In conclusion, Agenda 21 is the end result of almost two years of intensive negotiations; its value and contribution to the enhancement of the environment lie in its full implementation. That being the case, we all share in the responsibility to ensure full implementation of the Agenda. Thus, it is our sincere hope that we all, inspired by a spirit of cooperation and accommodation, will do our utmost to make a difference and expedite full implementation of the agreements reached at the Rio Conference.

Mr. PIBULSONGGRAM (Thailand): I welcome the opportunity to participate in the debate on this important agenda item. But, first, I should like to express our appreciation to Mr. Maurice Strong and his colleagues in the secretariat of the United Nations Conference on Environment and Development (UNCED) for their initiatives and dedication, which have successfully guided us through the UNCED process. Let me also take this

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opportunity to express my profound appreciation for the very important address the Secretary-General gave yesterday morning. It was comprehensive, lucid and challenging, and must be taken fully into consideration by members as we embark on difficult deliberations on a whole range of issues under this important agenda item. I also wish to thank the Rapporteur-General for his report on the Conference, which was also presented to us yesterday.

On behalf of the Thai delegation, I should also like to extend our sincere congratulations to Ambassador Razali Ismail of Malaysia on his appointment as the issues coordinator in the forthcoming negotiations on UNCED issues in the Second Committee. We are certain that under his able guidance the negotiations will come to a successful conclusion. The Thai delegation stands ready to extend its full cooperation in facilitating the work of the Committee.

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The success of the United Nations Conference on Environment and Development represents our commitment to a balanced and integrated approach to development. The Rio Declaration on Environment and Development, the principles for sustainable management of forests and Agenda 21 have become our development guides from now into the twenty-first century.

Thailand is proud to be part of this new direction. We reaffirm our full commitment to all the guiding principles and programmes of action emanating from the UNCED process. We stand ready to cooperate with the international community in the effort to implement Agenda 21 as well as the Conventions on Climate Change and on Biological Diversity.

The new realities of the post-UNCED era call for the integration of national and international development policies and strategies. At the national level, Thailand has made sustainable development the central goal of its development path. To meet environmental challenges resulting from rapid industrialization, Thailand's Seventh National Development Plan has shifted its focus towards income distribution, rural development, human-resource development, enhancement of the quality of life and protection of the environment. Those components define our national strategy for sustainable development.

To reinforce such important strategies, in 1991 we enacted new and comprehensive environmental legislation containing provisions that empower policy and planning agencies with enforcement authority, decentralize and delegate environmental authority to provincial and local governments and recognize the public's right to know about and to participate in national environmental affairs. These are major steps. They apply to the entire Kingdom, and they are in line with the programmes of action of Agenda 21 and the guiding principles of the Rio Declaration.

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National development strategies can be successfully implemented only in an international development environment that is conducive to them. This is why we agree with the proposition in Agenda 21 that the international economy should provide a supportive climate for achieving environment and development goals.

How can that be done? It can be done by promoting sustainable development through trade liberalization; by making trade and environment mutually supportive; by encouraging conducive macroeconomic policies; and, finally, by providing adequate financial resources to developing countries. If we accomplished all those things, we would achieve an international economic climate supportive of our environment and development goals.

Agenda 21 provides a basis for programmes of action to be adopted at the national, regional and international levels. My delegation believes that the immediate task before us is to adopt concrete actions and recommendations on the Agenda's issues that require further deliberation. We therefore wish to take this opportunity to express our views on the following issues.

With regard to financial resources, as reflected in chapter 33 of Agenda 21, we reaffirm Thailand's view that financial commitment by the developed countries is a prerequisite; without it Agenda 21 can never be successfully implemented. There must also be a regular review of the adequacy of funding.

Among the new financial initiatives in support of Agenda 21, we are particularly impressed with the proposals of the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) known as Capacity 21. We believe that they will assist developing countries in formulating development goals, plans and programmes leading to sustainable development. These can indeed be accomplished if UNDP

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is provided with sufficient resources. We again call upon the developed countries and those others in a position to do so to provide the necessary resources to ensure the success of Capacity 21. With sufficient resources, UNDP can enhance its role as the leading, central agency in the United Nations system for the capacity-building of the developing countries. Chapter 37 of Agenda 21 fully addresses this proposition. We give it our full support.

With regard to transfer of technology, discussed in chapter 34, we endorse the recommendation that

> "Consideration must be given to the role of patent protection and intellectual property rights along with an examination of their impact on the access to and the transfer of environmentally sound technology". (A/CONF.151/26 (Vol. III), para. 34.10)

Thailand attaches great importance to this issue, because it addresses what constitutes the effective responses to the need of the developing countries. Access to scientific and technological information and environmentally sound technology is a basic - indeed, an essential - requirement for sustainable development. Of this there is no doubt.

As to the issue of desertification, my delegation is pleased to reiterate its support, in principle, for the establishment of an intergovernmental negotiating committee for the elaboration of an international convention to combat desertification, particularly in Africa.

With regard to safeguarding the ocean resources, as reflected in chapter 17 of Agenda 21, the initiatives and input of the Group of 77, in particular of the small island developing countries, are very worthy of our full support. Indeed, we concur with the proposal to convene a global conference on the sustainable development of small island developing

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countries. At the same time, we believe it is also necessary to convene a global conference on integrated management and sustainable development of coastal and marine areas, including the exclusive economic zones. Such a conference will certainly be timely in 1994.

With regard to "Development Watch," as proposed in chapter 40 of Agenda 21, we are persuaded by the view that this programme will enhance the coordination within the United Nations so necessary to ensure the full integration of environment and development activities.

I now turn to another important issue under deliberation, that of institutional arrangements, discussed in chapter 38.

First and foremost, with regard to the establishment of the Commission on Sustainable Development, let me state that we support, in principle, the initiatives, again put forward by the Group of 77, on the post-UNCED institutional arrangements. Particularly relevant are points relating to the Commission's composition, its functions and the frequency of its meetings. Equally important are the views concerning the transfer of technology and the relations that will have to be developed with financing institutions and other agencies and bodies of the United Nations system.

Secondly, we believe that a high-level Commission on Sustainable Development should be set up as a functional Commission of the Economic and Social Council, in accordance with Article 68 of the Charter.

Thirdly, we support the establishment of the secretariat of the Commission on Sustainable Development, in accordance with Articles 8 and 101 of the Charter.

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In order to ensure its effectiveness, the secretariat should be equipped with highly qualified and competent personnel - with due regard to the importance of recruiting the staff on the principle of a wide geographical basis and gender balance.

As for the site of the secretariat, consideration should centre on logistic feasibility and adequate financial support. The proximity to various technical and specialized agencies of the United Nations could indeed enhance the Commission's effectiveness and therefore must indeed be borne in mind. We must also give due consideration to the financial needs and offers of financial support necessary for the secretariat to develop infrastructure and to carry out its multifaceted activities.

Fourthly, we fully support the convening of a special session of the General Assembly devoted to issues of the United Nations Conference on Environment and Development (UNCED). We can agree upon the date and venue during the forthcoming negotiations.

Fifthly, we are of the view that any post-UNCED institutional arrangement should be consistent with the efforts to reform the United Nations in the economic, social and related fields. In order to ensure the successful follow-up actions of UNCED, the United Nations Secretariat must integrate its economic, social and environmental work in a coherent structure that will mobilize its analytical and operational capacities at Headquarters and in the field.

Agenda 21 has prepared us for the challenges of the next century. Its implementation will not only be a test of our genuine commitment to global partnership but also be a determining factor of the survivability of humanity and of our posterity. It is therefore imperative that individual Governments, the United Nations system and other international organizations take all

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necessary steps to ensure success in the implementation of Agenda 21. Only through this path can we, together, reach the common goal of sustainable development for the benefit of all who dwell on planet Earth.

Mr. KABIR (Bangladesh): Our sincere appreciation is owed to the Secretary-General, Mr. Boutros Boutros-Ghali, for his comprehensive and useful introductory statement. I should also like to thank the Rapporteur-General, the Foreign Minister of Algeria, for his report on the Rio Conference.

I would also like to take this opportunity to express our deep appreciation to Mr. Maurice Strong, Secretary-General of UNCED, for his able stewardship in leading the world to Rio and making the historic Conference a success. The friendly people and the Government of Brazil deserve our heartfelt thanks for their warm hospitality and excellent arrangements for the meeting.

The historic Earth Summit in Rio has focused on what is perhaps the most important issue of our time: how to save our planet from environmental disaster and how to achieve sustainable development. The Rio Declaration, the Conventions on biodiversity and on climate change, the principles on forestry and Agenda 21 mark a significant change in mankind's attitude towards nature and the environment. The Farth Summit has reaffirmed that peace, development and environmental protection are indivisible. The ultimate goal of all our action, that is, how to achieve lasting peace in the world, will primarily depend on the success of our efforts in the field of sustainable development.

The principal product of the UNCED process is Agenda 21, which reflects a global consensus and a commitment at the highest level, and can rightly be termed as a Magna Carta of our times. Bangladesh believes that it is time we forged a new and equitable global partnership through the creation of new

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levels of cooperation among States and peoples with a view to fully implementing the principles and objectives of Agenda 21. The current session of the General Assembly offers a unique opportunity in the post-cold-war era to combine our efforts in this direction.

The Rio Conference has successfully brought to saliency the integral and interdependent nature of the Earth. The Conference raised global awareness about the health of our planet and the potential dangers of down-playing the issue of environment and development. It has given us the opportunity to look into the issue in its totality and thereby to sensitize the international community about the magnitude and seriousness of the problem.

My country, Bangladesh, is confronting serious problems of environmental degradation and consequent ecological imbalance caused by natural disasters, staggering poverty and overpopulation. The lack of environmental awareness and the non-availability of alternate resources hinder our efforts to address the problem in an effective manner.

One of the serious threats to our long-term development is the possible sea-level rise. With a one-metre rise of sea water the low-lying coastal area, which is about 15 per cent of our total land area, will go under sea water. THe consequence will be the further reduction of an already minimal land-person ratio and increased pressure on the very scarce natural resources.

Since the initiation of the UNCED process, our Government has taken some important steps that are in conformity with the principles and objectives of the Conference towards protection of the environment, environmentally sound and sustainable use of natural resourses, environment pollution control and sustainable development. Formulation and adoption of the National Environment

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Policy and Implementation Guidelines, 1992, is one of those steps in which efforts have been made to integrate environment with development in a policy framework. In order to ensure that the policy is implemented in the various sectors, a national environment committee, headed by the Prime Minister herself, has been formed. This action indicates the importance given to environmental issues in my country. The Government has also formulated a National Conservation Strategy towards conservation and sustainable use of natural resources.

In July this year Prime Minister Begum Khaleda Zia launched a tree plantation programme. Her call to make tree plantation a social movement and revolution has found enthusiastic response from people in all walks of life.

We are embarking on a study to assess the vulnerability of the country to sea-level rise. Though we contribute very little to the greenhouse gas emissions, Bangladesh will be one of the worst sufferers should the apprehended rise of sea-level take place. We are preparing a project in the field of forestry, wetland wildlife and biodiversity.

We have raised the demand for eco-democracy along with many other countries, preconditions of which are realization of the basic human needs, including food, clothing, shelter, health and education for all. We must preserve the environment through continued cooperation and partnership based on the sovereignty of States over their natural resources. Poverty is perhaps the worst blot on mankind. It is the prime factor responsible for environmental degradation. Therefore, eradication of poverty is of utmost importance.

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The primary responsibility for implementing Agenda 21 certainly rests with national Governments. But serious resource and technological constraints pose problems for the developing countries in moving in the direction of sustainable development. Unless binding commitments to the transfer of financial resources and environmentally sound technologies on concessional and non-commercial terms are made, the measures suggested at UNCED cannot be implemented by the developing countries alone.

It has been estimated that the developing countries would require $125 billion in extra aid annually to carry out the follow-up action of UNCED. The domestic resources that would need to be raised to finance their part of the programme would be four times that amount. Though the new and additional resources required would be stupendous, a good beginning could be made with a much smaller amount.

It is important that developing countries should play their due role in the governance of finances. The Global Environment Facility (GEF) can be an appropriate mechanism to fund global programmes, but it should be reformed in order to make its governing body more transparent and democratic to enable the developing countries to have equal participation in its decision-making and day-to-day administration. In this context, I should also like to point out that existing financial institutions such as the World Bank and the International Monetary Fund (IMF), too, should be revamped to undertake their expanded responsibility.

In this context I should like to emphasize that a good opportunity exists to release resources from military expenditure and to use them for sustainable development purposes. The concept of a peace dividend must be revived in the post-UNCED framework. According to the Human Development Report, 1992, the

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total peace dividend by the year 2000 could potentially be $1.5 trillion.

We are confident that the working group under the able chairmanship of Ambassador Razali will be successful in establishing the Commission on Sustainable Development as envisaged in chapter 38 of Agenda 21 in order to monitor the implementation of Agenda 21 and the effective follow-up of the UNCED process. We shall cooperate with other States in the establishment and operation of the Commission on Sustainable Development and consider it appropriate to make this important body responsible to the General Assembly. We fully endorse the formulation adopted by the Group of 77 concerning the structure and functions of the proposed Commission.

We also feel that in the interests of balanced economic growth and sustainable development, international economic, financial and trade institutions should be more responsive to the needs of the least developed countries. We urge the developed nations, as a first step, to reduce the debt burden through the conversion of the debt of least developed countries into grants. It is imperative that the international community give special attention to the particular situation and needs of the least developed countries in the areas of environment and development. In this regard Bangladesh welcomes the view expressed yesterday by Mr. David MacLean, Member of Parliament and Minister of State for the Environment and the Countryside of the United Kingdom, that substantial new and additional funding in the form of official development assistance will be required for the developing countries, particularly the least developed countries, to implement Agenda 21.

Effective and full implementation of Agenda 21 would require the transfer of environmentally sound technology to the developing countries and capacity-building, as mentioned in chapter 34 of Agenda 21. Bangladesh

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attaches particular importance to the promotion and financing of environmentally sound technology, and to access to and transfer of such technology and corresponding know-how to developing countries on concessional and preferential terms.

The momentum generated at Rio must be maintained through our continuous efforts to sensitize the international community to the crucial importance of environmental protection. Some very important international conferences are scheduled in the coming years, conferences such as the world social summit, the World Conference on Population and Development, and Habitat-2, where sufficient attention must be given to incorporating relevant articles of Agenda 21 in formulating our recommendations.

Regional cooperation in the field of the environment can, and indeed must, form a significant part of our UNCED follow-up strategy. We in South Asia have initiated a study, under the auspices of the South Asian Association for Regional Cooperation, on the impact of global climate change on the environment in the region.

The United Nations system is in a unique position to provide the necessary leadership to coordinate our efforts with a view to translating into reality the goals and ideals of UNCED. A system-wide coordinated and integrated approach drawing upon the comparative advantage of the different organs is absolutely essential in this regard. May I conclude by expressing the hope that under the guidance of the present dynamic leadership of the United Nations this will indeed be the case.

Mr. LI Daoyu (China)(interpretation from Chinese): The question of environment and development, which bears on the survival and well-being of mankind, is a challenge confronting the people of all countries. It was on the basis of this understanding that the General Assembly decided to launch the process of the United Nations Conference on Environment and Development three years ago.

Thanks to the unremitting efforts of all parties concerned, the United Nations Conference on Environment and Development held in Rio de Janeiro last June was successful. The Rio Declaration, Agenda 21 and other documents the Conference adopted embody and give expression to some important principles, which, among others, are: the people of all countries have the right to sustainable development; economic development must be integrated with environmental protection; while environmental protection is the common task of all mankind, the developed countries have greater responsibility; the special conditions and needs of developing countries should be given full attention; and the strengthening of international cooperation must be based on respect for State sovereignty. They reflect the new consensus that the international community has reached on the question of environment and development - a question that affects the common interests of the whole of mankind - and mark the welcome progress the long-stalled North-South dialogue has made in the important area of environment and development. The Conference, in proposing to forge a new global partnership for sustainable development, has shown the way forward for mankind to attain common and enduring prosperity and lay the foundation for the international community's future cooperation in the field of environment and development.

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However, we should recognize that the Conference is but a starting point for what will be a long process. There is a long way to go from the convergence on principles to reaping the fruits of cooperation. In the process, many problems need to be solved and a host of obstacles overcome. All parties concerned should seize the opportunity and take prompt, practical and effective follow-up action to implement comprehensively the agreements that were reached. Such an approach will not only push ahead the international community's cooperation on the question of environmental protection but also give a positive impetus to international developmental cooperation in a broader scope. We believe, regarding the follow-up actions in the wake of the Conference, that attention should be given to the following questions:

First, the agreement reached at the Conference should be understood in its entirety and implemented comprehensively. The Rio Declaration expounds the principles the international community should observe in handling the relationship between environment and development, whereas Agenda 21 is a programme of action for achieving sustainable development at the global, regional and national levels. The two are complementary to each other and neither is dispensable. Therefore, in the follow-up process, we should not only base our actions on Agenda 21 but also follow the Rio Declaration for guidance. Only in this way can the precious consensus reached in the UNCED process be genuinely implemented and progress be made.

Secondly, the principle that environmental protection shall constitute an integral part of the development process must be firmly observed. From the 1972 United Nations Conference on Human Environment to 1992's United Nations Conference on Environment and Development, it took mankind as many as 20 years

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to move from looking at environmental protection per se to taking an integrative approach towards environmental protection and economic development. This hard-won progress represents a qualitative leap for mankind in getting to know its relationship with nature and in the process of searching for the right path to prosperity and development. This principle overarched the entire UNCED process and underpinned all its achievements. Whether it can really be put into practice is a critical factor bearing on the success of the Conference's follow-up actions.

Thirdly, in the process of promoting the international community's cooperation in the field of environment and development, the United Nations should play a central role. This is because with its broad representation and wide-ranging functions, it is best placed to integrate environmental protection and economic development and to coordinate the efforts of the organs concerned in different fields, enabling them to support and complement each other to maximize their impact.

Concern with the environmental question should not distract the attention or divert the resources of the United Nations and other international organizations from their traditional areas of concern, especially those that are vital to the developing countries' economic and social development. It is necessary to set up a supervisory regime to guard against such an eventuality and to ensure that the financing for environmental protection provided to developing countries is indeed "new and additional".

Fourthly, in the follow-up activities, adequate consultations within the international community aimed at the broadest support should be conducted before any actions are taken. In particular, developing countries should be assured of full and effective participation.

(Mr. Li Daoyu, China)

The implementation of the agreements reached at the Conference on Environment and Development entails a wide range of actions in many fields of social and economic development at the international, regional and national levels. It is therefore necessary to grasp the key links and prioritize the tasks before us. As far as the current session of the General Assembly is concerned, we think it is appropriate to concentrate on matters that are the most important and urgent to the follow-up process and actions which are required by Agenda 21 in explicit terms. We should focus especially on the questions of finance and institution. Without adequate financial resources and institutional backup, Agenda 21 will remain a mere scrap of paper.

On the question of financial resources, the Agenda calls on the international community and especially developed countries to provide developing countries with "new and additional" financial resources so as to help them achieve sustainable development by implementing policies, strategies, programmes and measures formulated on the basis of the agreement reached at the Conference on Environment and Development. Consensus on this question is the cornerstone of the Rio agreement and will determine to what extent the agreement will materialize. We urge developed countries to make initial financial commitments during the General Assembly's current session, as required in Agenda 21, to jumpstart international cooperation on environment and development and increase promptly and drastically their official development assistance to developing countries, including the financial resources of such international financial institutions as the International Development Association and the Global Environment Facility.

(Mr. Li Daoyu, China)

On the question of institution, we are of the view that efforts should be made to establish relevant mechanisms including the Commission on Sustainable Development and create the necessary conditions for an early start of their functioning. In order to perform the functions laid down explicitly in the Agenda, the organizational modalities of the Commission on Sustainable Development should aim at both efficiency and effectiveness. Specifically speaking, it should be adequately representative, with the full participation of developing countries; it should establish practical, feasible and effective relations with other relevant agencies and organizations, including international financial institutions; and its secretariat should be able to render it strong support.

In addition, the General Assembly at its current session will set up an intergovernmental negotiating committee for the elaboration of an international convention to combat desertification in those countries experiencing serious drought and/or desertification, particularly in Africa, with a view to finalizing such a convention by June 1994. We hope that the convention will be formulated on schedule. The convention should contain appropriate commitments so as to establish an effective legal framework for the international community in its efforts to help the countries concerned, in particular those in Africa, to overcome the serious difficulties resulting from desertification to their economic and social development.

China is an environmentally significant country. We are well aware of our responsibility in protecting and ameliorating the global environment. We adopt a positive attitude towards international cooperation on environment and development, and participated in the whole process of the Conference on Environment and Development in a serious, practical and constructive manner.

(Mr.Li Daoyu, China)

As a further expression of our sincerity and determination to solve the environmental and developmental problems, the Chinese Government, right after the conclusion of the Conference, formulated a 10-point strategy concerning environment and development in accordance with the spirit of the Conference and China's own circumstances. Our Government has also started to formulate specific plans of action. We are convinced that the continuous progress in China's work on environmental protection will undoubtedly be the best contribution we can make to the endeavour for global environmental protection.

The meeting rose at 1.20 p.m.